

# Rise of a Football God

## #Chapter 3: Doomed aspirations [1] - Read Rise of a Football God Chapter 3: Doomed aspirations [1]

12, May, 2018...

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It was a bright sunny day.

The skies were clear and the scorching heat of the sun descended on the world without mercy, immolating everywhere with its heat.

The old zinc of the classroom made creaking sounds as the metal expanded due to the heat of the sun.

This was one of the numerous classrooms of Abraka Grammar School. It was already 3:15 in the afternoon, the last lecture for the day was about to come to an end and of course, the students were happy.

Not all of them were happy though, one of them was anxious.

It was a cute boy with silky black hair and a handsome face. He had an old hand-down wristwatch on his wrist with which he kept track of the time.

"Hey". A voice called in a muffled tone.

"Sam, stop looking at your wristwatch so much, the teacher will notice and he'll only end up prolonging the class even after the closing bell is rang".

"He better not!" Sam gritted his teeth. "I have a trial match to play".

His best friend sighed. "I've told you countless times already, get off it Sam. With what happened to you 2 years ago, you should temper your expectations".

"Having such high expectations will only end up hurting you".

"I don't care Ian," Sam stared at his best friend. "I hate school. Whether the devil likes it or not, I'm going to give my all and make it as a football player".

His best friend sighed. "Suit yourself then".

Yes, this was the once small and naïve Sam. 7 years on from that unforgettable night, Sam was now 13 years old and he was in JSS 3, about to write his junior WAEC examination.

His mind was not on the examination though, rather, all his attention was on the trial match that was being carried out in his town by scouts from FC Barcelona.

For the first time in years, European scouts came to Nigeria and they came to his town. Coincidentally, these scouts just had to come from his beloved club.

To Sam, this was a fate carefully designed in heaven.

This was his moment and he needed to seize it.

This was why he was getting impatient with this class.

Sam looked at his best friend. "The trial games for the scouts are scheduled to hold for 3 days and the first game today is starting in less than 15 minutes, I can't wait anymore".

"Please tell my sister that a teacher sent me on an errand and that she should go ahead, we'll meet at home".

"Sam, but..."

"Thank you Ian, I owe you one". He blinked and smiled at his best friend.

Bending down from his chair, obscured in the chaos of the crowded classroom, Sam snuck out.

Immediately after sneaking out of the room, he found a corner and immediately changed from his school uniform into an FC Barcelona jersey that he bought last week.

Slinging his bag across his back, Sam embarked on a sprint.

He didn't stop running until he arrived at the university building in Abraka. The trial games were scheduled to commence in the big field in the university.

Sam arrived to see a big crowd. Trials from Europe came. In an African country like Nigeria, this was a big deal and students of the university gathered in droves to watch the trial games of the first day.

By the time Sam arrived, it was already past 3:30 and the first game already started. The man whom he registered with for a fee of 1,500 naira, Coach Samson looked at him with a grimace "You're just coming".

"Sorry Coach, I was held up by something really important".

The coach scoffed. "What is more important than impressing the scouts? Children of nowadays really don't take football seriously, no wonder the national team keeps on faltering in the big football stages, unseriousness like this".

The coach glared at him. "Run laps at the touchline, that's your punishment. If I feel benevolent enough, you may play today".

"Sorry coach, thank you". Sam bowed and immediately ran away.

On the touchline, he started jogging laps up and down the field even as he looked at the European scouts.

He prayed. 'Please God, make it work out today'.

More than 100 under-15 youths registered for the tournament and they were grouped into 4 different teams. Team A to Team D were to play the tournament.

On the first day, Team A would play against Team C, and Team B would later play against Team D for their first leg matches.

On the second day, the second leg matches would be played.

The 2 losing teams will be eliminated while the 2 winning teams will make it to the final where they would play in a final game to impress the scouts.

Sam hoped to make it all the way to the final game and win. His team was Team A.

The first half of the game was a cagey affair as the youths ran at each other with exuberant energy, eager to impress.

There were tackles flying left and right, and some pieces of individual brilliance mixed in the play but the score remained tied.

When half-time came, their captain, a 15-year-old boy named Wale who also had the decision-making powers over the team addressed his teammates. This was when he sighted Sam in the back.

"Thank God". This boy muttered under his breath.

He went up to meet the coach. "Coach, Sam can play, right?"

Coach Samson looked at the 13-year-old who was taller than his age, he nodded. "Yes, he already served his punishment, he can play".

"Good," Wale smiled. "Sam, get ready, you'll enter in the second half".

When second half came, Sam was finally introduced into the game, replacing Theophilus as the attacking midfielder of Team A.

FWEEEE!

Once the ref's whistle was blown, from the first kick of the ball, it was clear that something changed in the game.

It was just a single change, a handing over of the baton between midfielders but in just 20 minutes, Sam was able to steal the show.

He was 13 years old, younger than most of his opponents but he bossed the midfield battle with his unreal physicality and impressive technical skill.

All these attributes paled in comparison to his core footballing attribute though. His most important element on the football pitch was his stamina.

Sam ran himself to the ground, winning tackles, spraying passes left and right to his teammates, while also going on solo runs with the ball.

In the 74th minute of the game, the deadlock was finally broken as Tega, Team A's striker caused chaos in the opposition 18-yard box.

Despite his dribbling, there was no space to shoot, Team B was defensively disciplined but this striker's vision enabled him to see the incoming midfielder.

Instinctively, Tega pushed the ball slightly, setting it up for Sam.

Sam did not miss his moment; he took it with aplomb.

His right leg hit the ball like a rifle.

BAM!

Team B's goalkeeper was rooted to the spot as the ball flew on a curve before tearing into the top left corner of the post.

"GOALLL!!!" Sam jumped, celebrating exuberantly with his teammates as they rushed to the corner flag.

Once the game restarted, Team B became even more physical, jumping into dangerous tackles as the game became even more cagey but in the 87th minute of the game, it was Sam again.

Surrounded by opposition players, he had the physicality to shrug them off, the vision to spot his teammate, and the skill to pull off the perfect pass.

It was a simple tap-in as Wale, the captain scored the second goal of the game. Team A celebrated again as Wale pointed at Sam, giving the credits to him.

After the 90th minute, the ref added 3 more minutes and a minute later, dribbling into the box with the ball again, Sam yearned to get his 2nd goal of the game. This was when one of the opposition center backs slid in ruthlessly.

His opponent's boots caught his ankle as Sam was aggressively brushed off his feet.

He screamed as he clutched his knee in pain.

"Ref, penalty!" Wale shouted.

The ref gave the opposition center back a straight red card. Team A players were happy, celebrating but when they finally turned to their teammate, this was when they noticed the tears on his face.

Sam was not faking it; he was in pain.

Wale's face changed as he rushed closer. "Sam, where does it hurt?"

In the 91st minute of the game, Sam's aspirations were doomed. Tega, Team A's striker took the penalty, converting it beautifully to make it 3-0 for his team but their victory was marred by the injury to their star player.

Sam felt like he was cursed, his whole world came crumbling down.

He broke down in tears. 'This ankle again?'